

Comments submitted by the Oregon Department Of Agriculture on the
Draft Strategic Plan and the Program Standards documents
provided by USDA for consideration and comment

Comments to the Draft Strategic Plan

While we acknowledge all of the hard work that has gone into this document, we feel there are some areas where it can be improved. We will list these areas and our concerns by page number or title.

Executive Summary Page. We agree there is support for a strong animal-movement tracking program nationwide. We are not convinced that the industry believes the NAIS is the complete and only answer. They believe that some current tools used for tracing can be enhanced, and in some cases that individual ID will be necessary. We do agree that for an animal tracking program to be successful that ultimately it must be mandatory.

The four key stakeholder concerns identified do hit the mark here in Oregon. The timelines however may be a little too optimistic as current state laws and resources do not allow for the infrastructure to implement a program. We can say that many producers are already adopting, and more will adopt this program on their own in a much quicker timeline.

Page 5, third paragraph from bottom, last sentence. We encourage APHIS to continue keeping an open mind and allow options such as group identification for cattle to be a choice, where practical and effective.

Bottom of page, we would encourage the Subcommittee be willing to accept comment from individuals and representatives of state agriculture.

Page 6, first paragraph. We encourage APHIS to take to heart the statement that policy makers will incorporate the results of field trials funded by USDA. We are confident there will be data to show how Group ID and Brand Inspection Records can and will work for cattle in some situations.

Page 8, third paragraph from bottom. It indicates that USDA will implement the electronic interstate certificate inspection system to record out of state movements. This system is mostly conceptual at this point and not ready to handle this load. The veterinary community is not prepared to implement the program at this time. We believe that electronic CVI should be considered and discussed completely separate from NAIS. There needs to be discussion and adoption of uniform standards, development of infrastructure guidelines, a means of signature verification as well as strategy for program implementation on a national scale.

Page 11, number 3 – Flexibility. We agree wholeheartedly with the whole paragraph. This must be kept in this document.

Page 18, Stages of Development. We do not disagree with the concept of stages but are concerned about potential heavy penalties if/when a state is slow to develop, especially when it takes legislation and state funding to implement the program.

Comments to the Draft Program Standards

Page 3, bottom of page, Premises. We agree that a premises should be a geographic location where animals are managed or kept. We are concerned that some states have chosen to use a person's contact address as a premises in spite of the fact that there is no animal use at that location. If this is allowed to occur it will cause needless times delays and potential misdirection for disease investigators.

Page 6, first paragraph. Where it says individual ID would become necessary when commingled from a group setting, we think the word "would" should be changed to "may".

Page 6, third paragraph from bottom and bottom one. We agree that official ID should include all of the mentioned methods, especially the brand recognition in certain circumstances. We disagree that the cattle industry has chosen RFID ear tags as the "preferred form" of ID for minimum standards. There are a number of producers and animal health officials in Western States who believe that there are situations where group identification for cattle may be appropriate and efficient.

Page 7 all. We agree with all on this page and suggest they all be adopted and made into law.

Page 10, it is unclear how the USDA intends to maintain security and confidentiality of the data and allow data access by tag distributors and tag site personnel at the same time. See also pages 18,19, 23 and 24.

Page 12, we agree with the statements of paragraphs 2 and 3. Agree with the statement that the system needs to have a central, unified database (i.e., single source) for complete and accurate tracking capabilities.

Page 20, the events that trigger the requirement for official ID. The requirement to record a change of ownership, even though the animals remain on the same premises may not change exposure to or risk for disease and therefore, may not be required. For disease control tracking purposes, there is no change.

Page 20, the ID method section. This section for cattle must include group ID as an option.

Page 21, who reports interstate movement is too limited (e.g., use of brand inspection system). States should decide what works best for them, as they will be funding most of this cost. See previous concerns about the electronic CVI. Also mentioned earlier, the

implementation and expectation that a new nationwide e-permit system alone will solve the issue is naïve, and too restrictive.

Page 27, III.A.Cattle section, the statement that cattle working group wants individual RFID may be accurate, but Western US wants group lot ID to be an option. Group lot ID must be a cattle option.

Page 34, official ID and methods definition. This definition is broad enough to allow adoption of things that work to accomplish the goals of NAIS. We strongly recommend the adoption of this definition.

Responses to the 12 questions posed by USDA about the Strategic Plan and NAIS in general.

The Draft Strategic Plan calls for making the entire system mandatory by January 2009. Is a mandatory identification program necessary to achieve successful animal disease surveillance, monitoring, and response system to support Federal animal health programs?

Yes. For the system to work properly there must be very high compliance. There is very little incentive for a voluntary system as proposed by USDA. Enforcement of a voluntary program is very limited.

In the current Draft Strategic Plan, the NAIS would require that producers be responsible for having their animals identified before the animals move to a premises where they are to be commingled with other animals, such as a sale barn. At what point and how should compliance be ensured? For example, should market managers, fair managers, etc., be responsible for ensuring compliance with this requirement before animals are unloaded at their facility or event?

Compliance should be insured within 24 hours of event by way of data delivered to official repository. Proposed rule states that persons who receive animals will be responsible for reporting their arrival at a specific premises. Animals will need to be unloaded at a premises before a declaration of their arrival can be made. Also, the first receiving station in a commerce track may be a tagging station as well.

In regard to cattle, individual identification would be achieved with an AIN tag that would be attached to the animal's left ear. It is acknowledged that some producers do not have the facilities to tag their animals; thus, the Draft Program Standards document contains an option for tagging sites, which are authorized premises where owners or persons responsible for cattle could have the cattle sent to have AIN tags applied. Do you think this is a viable option, i.e., can markets or other locations successfully provide this service to producers who are unable to tag their cattle at their farms?

There is concern for this option. There are no uniform standards to implement or funds available to maintain this option. There may be a confidentiality issue as well if premises information must be shared. Further, this service could be provided but at an uncertain cost to producers. However, if these issues can be resolved, we think this may be a viable option.

The current Draft Strategic Plan does not specify how compliance with identification and movement reporting requirements will be achieved when the sale is direct between a buyer and seller (or through their agents). In what manner should compliance with these requirements be achieved? Who should be responsible for meeting these requirements?

A simple change of ownership per se may not change the risk for disease especially when animals do not change premises. The only event that needs to be reported is a change in premises location. If no change in premises location occurs the contact person for that premises must know pertinent data about the animals such as the name of the current owner.

How can these types of transactions be inputted into the NAIS to obtain the necessary information in the least costly, most efficient manner?

We believe a direct method of electronic data input to a central database would be the least costly and most efficient method of data collection.

USDA suggests that animals should be identified anytime prior to entering commerce or being commingled with animals from other premises. Is this recommendation adequate to achieve timely traceback capabilities to support animal health programs or should a timeframe (age limit) for identifying the animals be considered?

Yes. Identifying animals anytime prior to entering commerce or being commingled with animals from other premises should be sufficient for disease control efforts.

Identification before commingling is basic to system design. We do not believe an additional timeframe needs to be added.

Are the timelines for implementing the NAIS, as discussed in the Draft Strategic Plan, realistic, too aggressive (i.e., allow too little time), or not aggressive enough (i.e., do not ensure that the NAIS will be implemented in a timely manner)?

2008 for premises registration system seems OK. 2009 for animal tracking system in place seems rushed without additional funding, guidance, standards and direction.

What are the most cost-effective and efficient ways for submitting information to the database (entered via the Internet, file transfer from a herd-management computer system, mail, phone, third-party submission of data)?

Ranked in order preference are Internet, file transfer, 3rd party database manager, mail and phone.

We are aware that many producers are concerned about the confidentiality of the information collected in the NAIS. Given the information identified in the draft documents, what specific information do you believe should be protected from disclosure and why?

We believe that the number of AIN tags should be kept confidential since it reveals pertinent business information such as premises location number of animals present and ownership. The name and address of owner, renter/lessee and contact person should also be kept confidential. The information in the national database should only to

be used in the resolution of a disease outbreak. The names of those involved are essential for contact to assure implementation of appropriate disease control measures.

The NAIS as planned would require States, producers, and other participating entities to provide information and develop and maintain records. How could we best minimize the burden associated with these requirements? For example, should both the seller and the buyer of a specific group of animals report the movement of the animals, or is reporting by one party adequate?

We believe that those who receive animals into their management such as buyers, haulers, feedlot managers, harvesting plants, etc should be responsible to report information to the national system and keep appropriate records.

Responses to APHIS questions regarding the utility of a privately managed database for holding animal location and movement information.

How should a private database system be funded?

The database could be funded by species groups through national associations (NCBA, NPPA, NSGA, etc) and supported by member tax or fee. But still must be bound by government UM&Rs and CFR codes.

Federal funding through MOUs may be another choice. Since information must be secure there needs to be strict guidelines for data quality assurance in place. MOUs (bounded by UM&R and/or CFR codes) could; help assure service quality and data integrity, help assure that data is protected from non-authorized uses by private entity (sales, etc), require measures to be in place that protect against data loss if private entity goes out of business and establish strict guidelines for profit taking by private entity.

We have concerns that private entities may not be secure enough to maintain data quality and integrity. They may not be able to integrate data with other entities in timely manner in a crisis event in a way that assures complete and accurate traceback of multiple species through multiple premises.

Should the NAIS allow for multiple privately managed databases?

We believe that a single database that has optimal data security best serves the system and the livestock industry in this effort. We are not aware of any successful model in existence now that integrates multiple privately managed databases.

Should a public (government) system be made available as well as a privately managed system so that producers would have a choice?

We believe a two-way system would be unnecessarily confusing and burdensome to all users. In addition if two systems available then we must have complete guarantee for integration of data from both for complete, timely and accurate traceback of individual animals.

Would either system work equally well at the State level?

It may depend on whether state needs ownership of the database to operate. If not a requirement, then either system could work provided that the database was fully integrated with other databases in a way that provided for complete, timely and accurate traceback of multiple species to multiple premises.

Respectfully submitted by,

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